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Informer Helped F.B.I. Trap Russian Attaché

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 6 — A senior Soviet military attaché, expelled from the United States last weekend, was arrested after the Federal Bureau of Investigation arranged for an informer to pass to him what the Russian was led to believe was a "sensitive" document, a high-ranking Government official said Friday.

The official said F.B.I. agents were on hand when the informer handed the document to the diplomat in a shopping center in suburban Virginia.

The attaché, Maj. Gen. Vasily I.

Chitov, was detained by bureau agents and later declared persona non grata and expelled.

Although General Chitov's detention and expulsion became known Thursday, it was not until Friday that it was disclosed that the F.B.I. had used an informer to trap the Soviet diplomat.

"The Soviets thought he was working for them, and he was not," the American official said.

The nature of the document handed to General Chitov was not disclosed, but the official said the Soviet Union thought the material was sensitive or classified. The official described the incident involving General Chitov as a case of the Russians "leaping at the bait."